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Summary record of the 280th meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 23 August 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Cisternas Reyes

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35 (*continued*)

Initial report of Guatemala (continued) (CRPD/C/GTM/1; CRPD/C/GTM/Q/1 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Guatemala took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 11-20

2. **Mr. Morán Herrera** (Guatemala), replying to a question posed by the Chair at the previous meeting, said that the rural development bill No. 4084 had not yet been adopted. However, the National Development Plan 2014-2032 included recognition of the fact that persons with disabilities were among the groups that faced the worst levels of exclusion. The Plan required all public institutions to take steps to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities to social protection, health care and education for all children from birth to the age of 18 years. In addition, the National Policy for Comprehensive Rural Development sought to promote inclusive human development, recognizing the multicultural nature of the country's population. While the Policy did not include specific reference to persons with disabilities, they were understood to be one of the most vulnerable groups in the rural community.

3. **Mr. Canto Mejía** (Guatemala) said that the Act on Femicide and Other Forms of Violence against Women strengthened protection for women victims of violence. The Code of Criminal Procedure provided for protection measures for victims of such violence. Where the victim had a disability, that was considered an aggravating circumstance. The Supreme Court had put in place protocols for dealing with cases involving violence against women, particularly sexual violence. There were no laws or policies in his country that encouraged or in any way allowed forced sterilization, which was prohibited under several laws. There was, however, a need to promote a culture of reporting and to establish appropriate mechanisms to guard against impunity if forced sterilization did take place.

4. The Code of Criminal Procedure provided that interpreters must be present, whenever they were needed by victims of crime, for indigenous languages or any type of non-verbal communication. The judge in charge of the case was responsible for ensuring that interpretation was available in order to enable communication between the victim and the court.

5. Under article 13 of the Act on the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents, the State respected parents' and legal guardians' right to discipline their children using prudent means. The State had undertaken a thorough review of the Act and found that it did not authorize corporal punishment in any way. The Act took full account of the principle of the best interests of the child. Protocols had been established in the education system on identifying and addressing cases of violence against children. Specific protection mechanisms were in place for girls who were victims of sexual violence. While the Government had taken numerous steps to improve child protection, it recognized that much remained to be done and would appreciate the Committee's recommendations in that regard.

6. Guatemala had ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labour Organization. In addition, under the Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous People, the Government had undertaken to recognize the country's linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity. Some 60 per cent of the population was currently considered indigenous, with most members of indigenous communities living in

poverty in rural areas, which made them vulnerable on several fronts. The Government was well aware that members of those communities with disabilities required additional assistance from the State to ensure that they were able to enjoy their rights on an equal footing with other citizens. Relevant measures were being taken at the inter-agency level in the areas of education, health care and social support programmes in order to ensure that those persons could be socially mobile.

7. **Mr. Ramírez Reyes** (National Council for Persons with Disabilities, Guatemala) drew attention to article 3 of the Public Notaries Code, which prohibited blind persons, deaf persons, persons who were mute and persons with any other type of physical or intellectual disability from working as public notaries. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities had been working for a reform of the Code.

8. On 20 November 2012, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had granted precautionary measures for 334 patients at the Federico Mora National Mental Health Hospital on the grounds that everyone hospitalized there was at risk. The Commission had been informed about the physical and sexual abuse of women and children and about patients being denied proper medical care, given inappropriate psychiatric treatment, locked in isolation rooms and tied to chairs. The Commission had requested that the Government should adopt measures to guarantee the life and personal integrity of the patients and provide them with proper medical care in accordance with their individual needs. It had also requested the Government to ensure that children were separated from adults; to keep patients who had been prosecuted and sentenced, or who were being deprived of liberty under court order, separate from the other patients and ensure that the other patients were protected by unarmed hospital staff; restrict the use of isolation rooms in accordance with international standards; and to implement immediate prevention measures so that no patients, especially women and children, were subjected to acts of physical, psychological or sexual violence by other patients, security agents or hospital staff. As of 2015, all the staff had been trained in the provision of appropriate treatment for persons with disabilities, particularly the need to administer treatment on the basis of informed consent. Six psychologists had been employed in order to ensure that patients with disabilities were treated in accordance with their rights. Patients with disabilities had been separated from those who had been prosecuted, and the security guards employed at the hospital had also been given appropriate training.

9. The Ministry of Health allocated some 10 million quetzales a year to the disability telethon on the understanding that the money would be distributed to organizations and institutions to which patients had been referred by the Ministry. However, the telethon had been found not to have honoured that commitment and had therefore been fined. Nonetheless, it continued to be allocated government funds, and usually received some 28 million quetzales in contributions from the public. Oversight mechanisms were clearly needed, particularly to ensure that images of persons with disabilities were not used in campaigns aimed at collecting funds that were then not spent on the care of those persons. He looked forward to hearing the Committee's recommendations in that regard.

10. **Mr. Cruz Cruz** (National Council for Persons with Disabilities, Guatemala) said that bill No. 5125 provided for support services for persons with disabilities in order to guarantee that they could fully engage in all areas of life, including the realization of their right to transportation and to human and technological assistance.

11. The National Coordinating Office for Disaster Reduction had been created under Decree Law No. 109-96 as the lead agency for services to persons in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. It was made up of representatives of public institutions, private humanitarian assistance agencies, relief agencies and civil society organizations. While the Coordinating Office had been working since 2008 to assist persons with disabilities who were affected by natural disasters and other emergency situations, its approach had not been

sufficiently systematic and it had not been involved in projects led by other national and international bodies on including persons with disabilities in natural disaster preparedness. An agreement had therefore been drawn up to promote close partnership in the area of disaster risk reduction between the Coordinating Office and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities. The agreement was based on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which indicated that persons with disabilities and their organizations were critical in the assessment of disaster risk and in designing and implementing plans tailored to specific requirements. The Coordinating Office was currently reviewing the agreement, but a round table of experts from both institutions was already working on an action plan. In addition, training had been provided to raise awareness among armed forces personnel of the rights of persons with disabilities.

12. The signing of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace had constituted a significant step forward for the country in terms of promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. During the peace negotiations, agreement had been reached on the need to adopt a mechanism for the inclusion and reintegration of the members of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union), the Guatemalan army and civil society who had disabilities as a result of the armed conflict. The resulting legislation had specified that the mechanism would include all persons with disabilities. A centre had been set up for war veterans with disabilities, who now received a war pension. The country now faced the challenge of finding a way to provide those same benefits to all persons with disabilities.

13. **Mr. Toledo Sebastián** (National Council for Persons with Disabilities, Guatemala) said that the Assistance to Persons with Disabilities Act was being revised with input from various stakeholders, including the departmental disability commissions. The legal capacity of persons with disabilities was being reviewed and funding was being sought to finance the harmonization of the Act with the Convention. A handbook on natural disasters and persons with disabilities had been issued in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Central Government had been alerted to the issue of persons with disabilities in natural disasters and the need to include persons with disabilities in disaster risk management programmes.

14. The security services required training in handling persons with disabilities. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities was working with the Ministry of the Interior in that regard and was working with the transport police to ensure that their personnel were properly informed about disability. Inevitably, the country's high crime rates had an impact on the safety of persons with disabilities. Although Guatemala lagged behind some other countries with regard to independent living, the matter would be addressed in the review of the Assistance to Persons with Disabilities Act, to ensure that persons with disabilities could receive the care they needed.

15. The Human Rights Advocate carried out work at the borders where refugees crossed. The Human Rights Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had developed initiatives to care for persons who had been injured or disabled on the network of freight trains that crossed from Mexico to the United States of America, known as the "death train", although it was difficult to follow up, once persons who had been detained and sent back to Guatemala returned to their communities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should monitor the situation closely, with a view to raising the visibility of the issue and preventing the injuries caused by the death train.

16. Complaints of violations of the rights of persons with disabilities were rarely followed up and complainants were publicly rebuked. A culture of complaint should be fostered, in order to encourage persons with disabilities to file complaints and to inform them and their representative organizations of their rights.

17. **Mr. Canto Mejía** (Guatemala) said that the criminalization of discrimination in 2002 had improved the situation of indigenous persons with disabilities. The law punished discrimination by commission or omission with fines and prison terms. Discrimination was prohibited on the grounds of gender, race, ethnicity, civil status or any other grounds and offences committed on ethnic or cultural grounds were considered crimes with aggravating circumstances. The law strengthened mutual respect in the country and promoted a complaints culture. Information should be disseminated in different languages, in order to inform people of their rights and encourage them to exercise those rights.

18. The National Registry of Persons, established 10 years previously to update the registration system and introduce electronic registration, had launched initiatives that included sending delegations to remote and rural areas to identify and record unregistered persons. Three years previously, it had placed representatives in hospitals to ensure that all children were registered at birth and had established a system for the registration of home births attended by midwives.

19. **Mr. Ramírez Reyes** (National Council for Persons with Disabilities, Guatemala) said, with regard to the accessibility of transport on arrival in his country, that less than 1 per cent of public transport was accessible. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities had called for disability experts to be included in urban development councils and for accessibility to be taken into account for new projects. There was little evidence that the capital's mayor was interested in improving the situation for persons with disabilities. Nonetheless, some parks had been made accessible to child wheelchair users and certain major avenues had been provided with ramps. His organization had called on the municipal authorities to permit the introduction of ramps elsewhere, in particular in the historical centre of the city. The new Government had, however, shown a willingness to address the issues faced by persons with disabilities, notably at the Social Development Cabinet and monthly meetings of senior management, which were attended by the heads of ministries.

20. Torture was punishable by imprisonment and was defined in the law as acts by public officials or persons undertaking public duty that were intended to inflict pain or serious physical or mental suffering for the purposes of obtaining information or a confession, or as punishment. The law also covered instigation of torture, acquiescence in torture and the use of torture by criminal organizations or for criminal purposes. Reforms would add psychological torture and the direct torture of a person with disabilities to the definition of torture.

21. **Mr. Morán Herrera** (Guatemala) said that, despite significant progress in the field of legislation, much work remained to be done, particularly on the application of the law in practice. It had been painful to hear some of the Committee's comments. There was, however, significant political will to support persons with disabilities in Guatemala.

Articles 21-33

22. **Mr. Tatić** asked whether a strong statement from the Committee on accessibility in the capital would be useful to the National Council for Persons with Disabilities. He asked whether the State party intended to seek assistance under the framework of international cooperation to tackle accessibility. With reference to articles 21 and 24 of the Convention, he wished to know more about the situation in practice for blind students and whether they were provided with textbooks in accessible formats at all levels of education. Given high illiteracy rates and low levels of primary school education among persons with disabilities, he requested information, and relevant statistics, on measures to reverse that trend, in particular by providing access to school, with reasonable accommodation, for children with disabilities and by ensuring that persons with disabilities were covered by literacy

programmes. More information should be provided on the accessibility of tourist sites in Guatemala.

23. **Ms. Pavey** requested information on the application of article 32 of the Convention. The delegation should provide details of specific international cooperation projects, including details of funds, bilateral and multilateral support and the exchange of best practices.

24. **Ms. Degener** asked, with reference to article 23, whether the delegation could provide her with statistics on the number of women with disabilities who had been sterilized since the signing of the Convention, including data on how many of those women were under 18 at the time. More information should be provided on how national implementation and monitoring of the Convention, under article 30, would be achieved in the State party. In particular, she wished to know who would act as the focal point for implementation, which body would act as an independent monitoring mechanism and whether that body would comply with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

25. **Mr. Ruskus** said that he would like information about the accessibility of health care for persons with disabilities, including those living in poverty and those living in rural areas. In particular, he wondered whether persons with disabilities enjoyed access to safe and affordable prescription medicines and could consult health-care professionals in mainstream health services. He would also welcome information on concrete measures or incentives for ensuring reasonable accommodation in health-care facilities.

26. **Mr. Langvad** asked how many school-age children with disabilities were not enrolled in school, what specific initiatives had been undertaken to significantly increase the number of children with disabilities who were attending school every day and what measures were in place to ensure that teachers and other school personnel were trained to implement inclusive education. He would also like information about any plans for transferring children with disabilities from segregated schools to mainstream schools. In addition, he would like to know about any social protection measures, such as social pensions and programmes providing disability-related expenses, to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoyed financial independence and an adequate standard of living and were able to form and provide for their own families. Lastly, he would like to know what steps were being taken to repeal article 15 (b) of the Elections and Political Parties Act, which stated that persons whose civic rights had been suspended were not entitled to vote.

27. **Mr. Basharu** enquired what action had been taken under the Access to Information Act since the publication of the State party's initial report (CRPD/C/GTM/1) to provide information in accessible formats for persons with visual and hearing impairments. He also wondered when the Congress of the Republic intended to pass the act recognizing sign language as an official language of the deaf and whether Braille would also be recognized as a primary mode of communication and education for the blind. Additionally, he would like to know whether the *Mi Familia Progresa* (My Family Progresses) cash transfer programme continued to operate and was sustainable and what percentage of the programme funds were allocated to indigenous persons with disabilities. He would welcome information on any action taken to ensure that persons with disabilities could take part in the electoral process, including accessibility measures and the provision of information to blind and deaf persons in accessible formats at voting centres. He would also like to know about the level of inclusion of persons with disabilities in political parties. With regard to article 31, he wondered whether census data were collected on indigenous people with disabilities, especially those belonging to the Maya, Garífuna, Xinca and Ladino groups.

28. **Mr. Buntan** asked how the Government interpreted the concept of inclusive education and how it intended to implement that concept. He was particularly interested in how the State party provided education for blind, deaf and deaf-blind persons in an environment that maximized learning for them. He would also like to know what role the Government saw for special schools in supporting the implementation of inclusive education. With regard to article 32, he wondered whether the State party intended to incorporate disability perspectives in its efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to utilize any support it received from the international community for those efforts to advance the implementation of the Convention.

29. **Ms. Kingston** enquired what support was available to the parents of children with disabilities to enable them to avoid having to place their children in institutions. She would especially like to know about support for parents in indigenous communities and in remote or rural areas. She would also like to know whether free and informed consent was always obtained in advance for the performance of abortions or the use of contraceptives, particularly in institutions where women with psychosocial disabilities were housed. In addition, she wished to know what measures were envisaged to empower and promote the economic inclusion of all, irrespective of disability status, in accordance with article 28 of the Convention and Sustainable Development Goal 10. Lastly, she would like information on the State party's plans for increasing the availability of high-quality, timely, reliable data disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability status, geographical representation and other characteristics relevant in the Guatemalan context.

30. **Mr. Parra Dussan** said that he would like to know how many persons with disabilities were enrolled as students in public and private universities, whether scholarships were available to them for university studies and whether a certain number of places were reserved for students with disabilities in public universities. He was also curious as to whether there were quotas for the employment of persons with disabilities in the public sector.

31. **Ms. Peláez Narváez** said that she wished to make it clear that the Committee was in no way opposed to the rehabilitation programmes and activities offered by the telethon organization. The Committee's concern was that such televised fundraising campaigns might violate the rights of persons with disabilities and show a lack of respect for their dignity. It was also a source of concern that the telethon organization received fully half of the funds that the National Council for Persons with Disabilities made available to civil society organizations for projects to benefit persons with disabilities. It was not clear, however, whether the Council had transparent mechanisms for distributing those funds and for monitoring the projects that received funding, nor was it clear how many projects had been approved to date. The Committee was also concerned that the National Registry of Persons did not identify persons with disabilities or include institutionalized children, many of whom had disabilities. In that connection, it was disappointing that the delegation had failed to answer the Committee's questions regarding the institutionalization of children and the conditions in which they lived. Information from civil society indicated that the State party was not fulfilling its obligation under article 7 to ensure that children with disabilities could express their views on all matters affecting them.

32. She would like to know what measures the State party was taking to promote family fostering and adoption of abandoned and institutionalized children with disabilities. She would also like to know about any measures envisaged to enable children with disabilities in rural areas to attend school with their peers during the schoolday, rather than after regular hours, as was currently the practice. In addition, she would welcome information on how the State party ensured the participation of indigenous persons with disabilities in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies relating to indigenous peoples. She also wondered whether it was taking steps to make information available in

accessible formats to members of the Maya, Garífuna and Xinca communities. For example, was information available in Braille in their languages? She remained concerned about the conditions at the Federico Mora National Mental Health Hospital and wondered when legislation providing for community-based mental health services might be enacted. She also wondered whether, in the light of the high number of cases of sexual abuse reportedly occurring in that institution and others, the State party had considered implementing institutional HIV/AIDS prevention programmes.

33. The State party was to be commended for making ballots available in Braille; however, those ballots did not protect the right of persons with disabilities to vote by secret ballot. Did the State party intend to rectify that situation? She would like to know when the State party intended to bring its copyright laws into conformity with the provisions of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled (the Marrakesh Treaty). She also wondered whether books were available in accessible formats for blind persons in community, school and university libraries. In relation to article 32, she remained concerned that international cooperation resources were being used to perpetuate a segregation model, which was not at all in line with the Convention. As for article 33, she would like to know whether the State party intended to designate the National Council for Persons with Disabilities as the focal point for implementation of the Convention and, if so, what support it would offer to ensure that the Council could fulfil its functions. Similarly, she wondered whether the Office of the Human Rights Advocate was to be designated as the independent monitoring mechanism and how it was to be supported in carrying out its responsibilities independently. Lastly, she would like to know when the National Council for Persons with Disabilities would put in place a transparent mechanism for involving persons with disabilities in the monitoring process through their representative organizations.

34. **The Chair** asked whether the bill on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in employment had been enacted into law and whether the State party had established social protection floors, as recommended by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in order to ensure broad social security coverage, including for persons with disabilities.

The meeting was suspended at noon and resumed at 12.20 p.m.

35. **Mr. Morán Herrera** (Guatemala) said that, under the cash-transfer programme implemented by the Ministry of Social Development, 682,484 women and 19,709 men had received payments annually between 2012 and 2015. In terms of breakdown by indigenous group, 382,254 Maya, 312,076 Ladino, 1,175 Xinca and 150 Garífuna had received transfers. Efforts were being made in cooperation with the Presidential Commission on Discrimination and Racism against Indigenous Peoples to increase the participation of the Garífuna community in the programme. The main objectives of the transfers, which were of the order of 300 quetzales per month, were to develop human capital and break the generational cycle of poverty. Beneficiaries received the transfers on condition that their children attended school and health check-ups. The Government attached great importance to ensuring the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups, including older persons and persons with disabilities, in its social programmes. The Ministry of Social Development had recently concluded an agreement with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, under which a single registry of persons with disabilities would be developed to record the details of beneficiaries of social programmes with disabilities, thereby contributing to efforts to identify the number of persons with disabilities nationwide. The data from the first National Survey on Disabilities were also being updated. The Government did not have sufficient resources to conduct all that work itself and thus needed the support of the international community. The authorities had discussed with the UNICEF country team the importance of interventions for children with disabilities. The

Social Development Cabinet and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities planned to make a request for the establishment of liaison units in all government institutions to facilitate the mainstreaming of disability issues.

36. **Mr. Canto Mejía** (Guatemala), responding to questions on article 24, said that the research conducted on inclusive education in 2014 had focused on the access, acceptance and participation of persons with disabilities in the national education system. Guatemala had adapted its domestic legislation on the basis of such instruments as the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. The National Education Act guaranteed the right to education for all children without distinction. The Act on Special Education for Persons with Special Capacities provided for the establishment of special education centres, although a transition was now under way towards a system of inclusive education. Such centres were still in place for cases that required specialized attention, but the number of mainstream, inclusive schools was increasing. In some inclusive schools, regular teachers received support from itinerant pedagogical advisers, while in others there were specialized teachers trained to work with children with disabilities. In total, there were approximately 14,000 students with disabilities in the national education system who received specific support: more than 1,900 children with disabilities were in special education centres, approximately 3,000 were in inclusive schools with pedagogical advisers and 8,500 were in inclusive schools with a specialized teacher. Children in special education centres were gradually being transferred to inclusive schools.

37. The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the public University of San Carlos, had developed a programme for in-service teachers, under which they continued to work during the week and attended training at weekends on how to meet the needs of children with disabilities. To date, some 20,000 of the country's 160,000 teachers had received training, and efforts were being made to increase that number. The Ministry of Education was also developing institutional capacity and developing training programmes for curriculum designers. Efforts were being made to remedy the lack of classroom tools for teachers working with children with disabilities, as had been identified in the research project. The Ministry of Education provided kits with special materials in accessible formats for children with visual and hearing impairments, which were distributed to all inclusive schools. Since 2009, an educational scholarship programme for children with disabilities had been implemented and grown every year. Teachers were encouraged to help identify children in their communities who were not attending school. Population statistics were somewhat outdated, as the last census had been conducted in 2002. However, there were plans to conduct another in 2017, which would enable the collection of disaggregated statistics on persons with disabilities in different age groups.

38. **Mr. Morán Herrera** (Guatemala), responding to the questions on the Sustainable Development Goals, said that the State party's K'atun: Nuestra Guatemala National Development Plan covered the period up to 2032. One of the priority objectives set by the Government for the next four years was to reduce chronic malnutrition, which was intrinsically linked to disability, by 10 per cent. A range of measures was being implemented to achieve that ambitious target, for example in the area of water and sanitation and conditional cash transfers.

39. **Mr. Ramírez Reyes** (National Council for Persons with Disabilities, Guatemala) said that the 2014 legislative initiative on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in employment had unfortunately been unsuccessful and had required significant changes. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities planned to put forward a new bill on employment inclusion, taking account of the recommendation made by the Chair at the recent Iberoamérica Incluye forum to initially establish a quota system stipulating that 2 per cent of employees must be persons with disabilities, as well as ensuring gender equality.

The proposed bill also provided that persons with disabilities could take early retirement between three and five years before the standard retirement age. With regard to the Federico Mora National Mental Health Hospital, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare had a dedicated mental health department, which had developed a plan covering the whole country. There was also a specific programme on HIV/AIDS, for which Guatemala was receiving international support. There were more than 20,000 midwives registered with the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, working primarily in rural areas and trained to identify congenital abnormalities.

40. **Mr. Cruz Cruz** (National Council for Persons with Disabilities, Guatemala) said that there were technical guidelines on the adoption of children who were difficult to place, including children with disabilities. As at June 2015, the National Adoption Council had 393 children awaiting adoption, of whom 75 per cent were difficult to place, as the majority of prospective adoptive parents wished to adopt children who did not have any special medical needs or disabilities, were under the age of 7 years and did not have any siblings. The National Reproductive Health Programme covered responsible parenthood and pregnancy, including for persons with disabilities. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities provided 500,000 quetzales in funding annually to its member organizations; there were established procedures and criteria for the evaluation of funding proposals. Organizations that wished to apply for funding had to be registered with the Office of the Comptroller-General of Accounts.

41. **Mr. Toledo Sebastián** (National Council for Persons with Disabilities, Guatemala) said that a meeting to follow up the implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty was planned for September 2016. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities had set up a committee, composed primarily of persons with visual impairments, to monitor implementation. It was hoped that significant progress would be made, as the proportion of publications available in accessible format was currently extremely small. Discussions were under way on proposed reforms to the Electoral and Political Parties Act, such as enhancing the accessibility of polling stations, introducing a quota for the number of candidates with disabilities for elections to public office, ensuring the availability of electoral information in accessible formats and including sign language in the electoral process. There were no up-to-date data on access to services for persons with disabilities, but, according to statistics from 2000, 80 per cent of services were provided by private companies and institutions and 20 per cent by the State. Although some progress had been made in that area, those figures had probably not changed significantly. The results of the second National Survey on Disabilities would be available in December 2016. The Government was aware of the need to update the basic guide for the classification of disability and to build the capacity of the country's organizations of persons with disabilities.

42. **Mr. Morán Herrera** (Guatemala) said that there was a strong political will in the country to deal with disability issues with the seriousness that they deserved and to prioritize them in government policy. The fact that Guatemala was a country with 22 languages and 24 ethnic groups sometimes posed additional challenges. However, with the support of the Committee and the international community, Guatemala was confident that it would make progress.

43. **Ms. Peláez Narváez** thanked the delegation for its frank and open answers to the questions raised by the Committee and also welcomed the important contribution made by Guatemalan organizations of persons with disabilities. She trusted that the Committee's concluding observations would serve to strengthen the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in Guatemala.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.